

Report to: Cabinet



Date of Meeting 1 November 2023

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Review date for release N/A

A review of the StreetScene bin collection service and town and parishes' service charges

Report summary:

The review of the StreetScene bin collection service has examined the council's litter, recycling and dog collection service charges and operational model.

- An increase in operating costs requires an uplift in service charges that are consistent charges across the district.
- The review has started looking at alternative operational models which follows national trends and internal and external challenges, and has identified the need for further future strategic planning.
- An electronic map of the bins locations has been produced to provide management information and support future planning.
- The anticipated population growth in Cranbrook, the proposed new town and the wider district will significantly impact on the delivery of the bin collection service and further work is required to develop a strategic plan with stakeholders.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes No

Policy Framework Yes No

Recommendation:

1. Cabinet to endorse the continuation of the current litter and dog bin collection service whilst further strategic options are considered.
2. Cabinet to agree to increase all town and parish service charges to £4.00 per litter bin collection which will be spread over two years to reduce the impact on customers.
3. QR codes to be introduced on all litter, dog and recycling bins to improve quality management.
4. Further work will be undertaken to explore alternative models and working relationships between StreetScene Operations and Recycling and Waste as part of the SUEZ contract replacement work which is currently underway.
5. StreetScene Operations to develop a strategic plan to manage the anticipated population growth in Cranbrook, the proposed new town and the wider district.
6. The Strata project to provide StreetScene Operations with an appropriate software package to manage its operations efficiently is prioritised.

Reason for recommendation:

StreetScene Service Plan Objective 5 - Review of the collection model for street litter bins and dog waste bins and the charges

- Bring about a more equitable scheme of charges for such services, which cover delivery costs.
- Appraise the various models of collection and charges a clearer and more equitable charging schedule across the district where we provide such services.

Officer: David Snape, StreetScene Project Officer and Andrew Hancock Assistant Director - StreetScene

Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- Climate Action and Emergency Response
- Coast, Country and Environment
- Council and Corporate Co-ordination
- Communications and Democracy
- Economy
- Finance and Assets
- Strategic Planning
- Sustainable Homes and Communities
- Culture, Leisure, Sport and Tourism

Equalities impact Low Impact

Climate change Medium Impact

Risk: Medium Risk; Failure to prepare and plan for future growth could lead to a degradation of service standards and inefficiency and budget pressure. The current service charges are not consistent across the district and there is a risk of inequity. A revision in the charges will result in some customers incurring higher charges with potential reputational damage.

Links to background information

- [StreetScene's Main Annual Budgets 2023/24](#)
- [Streetscene Bin Product Range – June 2023](#)

Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

- Better homes and communities for all
- A greener East Devon
- A resilient economy

Report in full

Baseline Data

1. There are 762 litter and 71 recycling bins in the district that are emptied by the StreetScene operatives. There are 396 dog bins that are emptied by Suez.
2. The cost of the dog bin collections is included in the domestic bin collection service contract for household bin and recycling collections, which is managed by Recycling and Waste.
3. The frequency of bin collections ranges from once a week in rural areas to three collections per day on the Exmouth Esplanade during the summer.

Dog Bin Collections

4. Dog waste is mixed with non-recyclable waste when it is taken to the Energy From Waste (EFW) facility in Exeter, as EFW do not accept unmixed dog waste.
5. There are 3 full-time Suez operatives emptying the dog bins and there is no provision to cover holiday, sickness from the Recycling and Waste workforce. This will lead to inconsistent collections and an increase in complaints.

Service Charges

Dog Bin Collections

6. Dog bin costs are currently linked into the overall SUEZ contract. The cost per collection will be reviewed as part of the contract replacement work, which has recently started within the Recycling and Waste Team. As part of this work, we will also review the best place for the dog bin collection service to sit within the council.
7. The Portfolio Holder report rates set out below are based on 3 dog bin collections per week and are charge pro-rata as required. These charges are reviewed every year as part of our annual charges review and we will continue in this way until contract replacement.
8. The rate equates to £2.12 per collection and is lower than the proposed new litter bin collections and we intend to address this rate during SUEZ contract replacement.

CHARGES 2023-24

	2020-2021	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Additional Waste Collections (10 bags)	£40.00	£42.00	£45.00	£47.00
Dog Bin Collections for Parish Councils (per bin)	£260.00	£270.00	£300.00	£330.00
Green Waste (annual)	£48.00	£48.00	£48.00	£50.00

9. Members to consider applying the proposed increase to the litter bin collection rate to the dog bin collections. Dog bin collection costs are included in the Suez contract and so are more complex to extrapolate, but based on our own measures of collection costs and because we are entering a cost-plus arrangement with Suez it would seem prudent to increase collection charges to ensure the council is covering costs. Alternatively, more work can be undertaken in preparation for contract replacement in 2026.

Litter Bin Collections

10. The 2023/24 bin collection charge to town and parish councils is £110 per bin per year (£2.12 per collection). This is based on an historical cost with annual inflation uplifts and bears no relation to our actual service costs.
11. Cranbrook Town Council (CTC) is charged £5.00 per bin collection, based on 29 bins located on unadopted land. This charge is based on two collections per week, but three collections are made each week to deal with the volume of waste. This reduces the weekly charge to £3.45 per bin collection.
12. The Cranbrook Town Council collections were priced at a level to achieve full cost recovery. The charge to other town and parish councils does not cover costs and this has led to the imbalance between what Cranbrook and other town and parish councils pay.
13. StreetScene Operation's services charges have not been previously benchmarked and the council recognises that they have been artificially low for many years.
14. Local district councils were approached to participate in a benchmarking exercise, but have failed to respond. During the next stage of the project, benchmarking will be extended further to enable comparisons to be made.

Service Delivery Costs

15. StreetScene's main [annual budgets](#) 2023/24:
 - Labour salaries, including superannuation: £1,333,200
 - Vehicles and associated costs for cleansing, excluding sweepers: £172,022
16. We have reviewed the Cranbrook Town Council service costs and established that current service charges do not cover the cost of delivering the service. Labour charges are based on the lowest hourly paid to an operative and do not include oncosts for pensions, holidays and sickness pay. Fuel is included, but there is no allowance for vehicle purchase or lease costs, maintenance costs, PPE or equipment and management costs.
17. Based on 2023/24 salaries, the service charge will need to increase to [£4.00 per collection](#) to cover operating costs. This will need to be applied to all town and parish councils from April 2024 to ensure costs are covered and are consistent charging across the district. To mitigate the impact of the increase that the charge is increased over two years + RPI.

Council	Dog Bins	Litter Bins	Frequency Weekly	Total Collections	23/24 Total Recharge	Charge per collection 23/24	24/25 Total Recharge	25/26 Total Recharge
Town A	0	4	1	208	£440.00	£2.12	£636.48	£832.00
CHARGES	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26		Charge per collection 23/24	Charge per collection 24/25	Charge per collection 25/26	
1 x weekly	£110.00	£159.12	£208.00		£2.12	£3.06	£4.00	
2 x weekly	£220.00	£318.24	£416.00					
3 x weekly	£330.00	£477.36	£624.00					

A Combined Litter And Dog Waste Collection Model

18. A combined waste collection model would see the removal of all the dog bins in the district and the dog waste collected in the black litter bins, which is already happening in many of areas in the district.
19. Although this model would remove the need for a separate dog waste collection service, significant additional capital investment will be required to install larger litter bins if the dog bins are removed.
20. Throughout the district there are many bins that cannot be easily accessed by the collection vehicles, which requires the operatives to carry the litter long distances to their vehicles. The additional weight of dog waste will make this impractical in these locations and will require bins to be relocated. Dog waste is heavy and will significantly increase the total weight of the waste in the bins. There are 768 litter bins in the district that may need relocating or replacing in order to manage the larger volume of combined waste.
21. More vehicles with side-lifts will be required to tip the wheelie bins into the vehicle to reduce manual handling issues. These vehicles are leased at a cost of £54,000 per vehicle over 6-years.
22. The review has considered the costs and benefits of introducing a combined waste pilot to evaluate an alternative operating model. It is estimated that the setup costs of a pilot project would be over £13,300 to replace the existing 19 bins with 14 larger bins. The average cost of installing a replacement bin would be approximately £951.
23. Based on this pilot costings, if the council was to replace the current 768 litter bins the total cost would be approximately £730,000. It is anticipated that not every bin would need replacing, but designated barbeque areas will incur additional costs as these bins require steel internal casings to prevent fire damage from hot barbeques.
24. An existing vehicle with a side-lift could be used during a pilot to lift the wheelie bins, but additional staff may be required to deal with extra collections. Additional vehicles will be required if this model is introduced throughout the district.
25. Due the high setup costs, it is recommended that a pilot is not progressed. As the existing litter bins can be used to collect dog waste, there is limited benefit in removing the dog bins and installing larger litter bins. The council should promote that any bin can be used for general litter and dog waste and larger litter bins installed to replace existing bins if required.

Alternative Service Delivery Options

26. Local authorities are facing the challenges of external factors which include the legislative outcomes of the Environmental Act 2021 and market drivers. Many are looking to alternative models that can bring together existing services such as Recycling & Waste and StreetScene. There are 3 main models available to the council:
 - In-house delivery
 - Outsourced delivery
 - Local Authority Trading Company
27. It is suggested that a Portfolio Holder Leader team be convened to take forward the preparation work to consider the best future option for EDDC.

Bin Mapping And Software

28. As part of this review the location of all of the council's bins have been mapped and this information is now available on the eMap system.

29. Next year a QR code and ID number will be added to every bin to enable members of the public to report damaged and full bins via the council's website.
30. During the bin mapping exercise it became apparent that a management system is required to monitor operatives' time, volume of work and the resources required to meet demand. There is a job in Strata's unrefined backlog of projects which came from an earlier project circa 2017 to converge the 3 council partners' software to manage their public realm cleansing.
31. It is recommended that this work is restarted to ensure our systems are as efficient as possible and provide the evidence based needed for alternative models of operations.

Bin Products

32. There is a diverse mixture of bin products throughout the district and many of the bins have been installed incorrectly or in the wrong location, causing difficulties when emptying the bins.
33. StreetScene Operations has introduced a [new range of bin products](#) for the town and parish councils to choose from when requesting new bins. At present, StreetScene Operations do not have capacity to increase the number of bins, but stage 2 of the project will present policy suggestions for members to consider.
34. All new bins will be installed by StreetScene Operations, who will look to work with the town and parish councils to ensure new bins are installed in appropriate locations for collections.

Cranbrook

35. The anticipated population growth in Cranbrook will significantly impact on the delivery of the StreetScene Operation's services. It is proposed that the next stage of the project considers the future strategic direction of the service in Cranbrook to address the operational issues identified during the review.
36. The council has already changed and adapted its Recycling and Waste service to allow capacity for growth in Cranbrook and StreetScene Operations will adopt a similar approach for its services.
37. StreetScene Operations currently operates out of the Exmouth and Sidmouth depots. It is recognised that lost time and travel costs would be reduced if StreetScene Operations had a premises in the Cranbrook or Honiton area. StreetScene Operations is working with Property, Asset and Commercialisation Team to identify further depots locations throughout the district as part of the depot review to meet operation need into the future

Financial implications:

Financial implications are included within the report giving detail of the cost recovery position and providing an equitable pricing solution. With any further strategic options review the cost recovery position should be maintained including covering the cost of any required capital investment.

Legal implications:

The legal implications are dealt with in the body of the report.